Subject: method to display coins

Mead, George Walcott

[Middlebury, VT]

1930

Middlebury, Vermont, January 18, 1930.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Numismatic Department,

Fifth Avenue & 81st St., New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

How do you display coins. Or ought I to ask some one else, if so, whom ? If not too much trouble I shall be glad to have you tell me.

I have old English, Spanish and early and rare United States coins. In the collection are a few duplicates which will enable me to show the face and the reverse. One of my faculty friends knows how to copy a coin so as to display its reverse. Therefore I am secure on that point. But as to a suitable case, the coin arrangement therein, the color and material of the background and how to fasten them in the case so that they will not slide around;--about all of this I am very uncertain.

In keeping track and account of the coins, is it a good plan the number the coins in the case and then use that same number in a descriptive catalogue, or would a descriptive card in the case beside or below the coin be better and more likely to stimulate interest in them among the students, their friends and visitors ?

This is to be a permanent display. It will partially show the mintages of the United States, and the English and Spanish pieces will be illustrative of early Vermont days when in deeds and bills of sale Spanish milled dollars, or pounds, shillings and pence were mentioned.. What information you can give me on this subject will be greatly appreciated by Middlebury College and myself.

Very truly yours

G. Walcott Mead.

January 27th 1930

Mr. G.Walcott Mead
Middlebury, Vermont

Dear Sir:

Your letter to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has been turned over to us for reply. We have always shown coins in flat or nearly flat cases, the backboards of which are within two inches or less of the glass. The interiors of these cases are lined with black felt, because we find that this medium and color answers the best year in and year out. As the coins are shown in flat cases, we do not fasten them down, but show them in rows, apppopriately labelled. In our perpendicular or wall cases, we, for the most part, show only medals. Here we have pursued two methods. In some cases we have used rows of horizontal wooden strips with a shallow groove or channel in which we placed the medals. We have more or less discarded this method and now use as follows: We fasten each medal to the board by two or three small round headed brass brads or nails. In a few cases where very large or thick medals are shown, we use a screw hook, the end of which has been cut down so as to leave no more projection over the medal than is absolutely necessary. We suggest your using this method for coins, bearing in mind that the nails or any other device that you use for fastening be as inconspicuous as possible.

We have no hard and fast method for labelling. Each case or exhibit is a thing unto itself, and we try to keep the labels small, brief and at a minimum, because the pieces shown are small and we do not wish an exhibition of labels.

Trusting this information will be of some use to you,

Yours very truly,

Curator.